The two Prime Minister welcomed the progress made by the Special Representatives in seeking a framework for settlement of the boundary question that is fair, reasonable, mutually acceptable, and based on the agreement on Guiding Priniciples and Political Parameters signed in April 2005. While the SRs continue their efforts, both sides reiterated their mutual commitment to maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

PM's visit has led to a broadening of our functional cooperation in bilateral areas and to the deepening of mutual understanding between our two countries.

Ill-treatment of Ethnic Indians in Malaysia

257. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India expressed concern over the alleged ill-treatment of ethnic Indians in Malaysia;

(b) whether at least 10,000 ethnic Indians took part in demonstration, banned by Government, in Kuala Lumpur complaining alleged marginalization of ethnic Indians in Malaysia;

(c) whether Indians make up 8 per cent of Malaysia's 27 million people, the third biggest group after ethnic Malays and Chinese; and

(d) if so, points raised by India to the Malaysian Government?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) In a *suo motu* statement made in Parliament on 30 November 2007, the Minister of External Affairs referred to concerns expressed by Hon'ble Members of Parliament regarding the alleged harassment of participants of the rally organised by the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) in Kuala Lumpur on 25 November 2007 and subsequent related matters. The Minister of External Affairs stated that Government remain deeply solicitous for the welfare of people of Indian origin living abroad and noted that there is a large community of people of Indian origin in Malaysia who are citizens of that country. He added that we have friendly relations with Malaysia and we are in touch with the Malaysian authorities in the related matter.

(b) The Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) organised a rally in Kuala Lumpur on 25 November 2007, which was attended by several thousand persons of Indian origin. The stated purpose of the rally was to had over a petition to the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur seeking the support of Queen Elizabeth II for a class action suit filed in the UK for the exploitation of Indians who were brought to Malaysia as indentured labour. The rally also sought to highlight various concerns and grievances of the Indian community in Malaysia.

(c) There are approximately 1.9 million people of Indian origin in Malaysia who account for about 8% of the country's population. Indians are the third largest ethnic group in Malaysia, after Malays and Chinese.

(d) During interactions with Malaysian authorities, concerns expressed in India, including in the Parliament, regarding developments pertaining to the Indian community in Malaysia have been suitably conveyed.